



GUIDELINES FOR DESIGN PROFESSIONALS FOR SELECTING SPECIAL INSPECTIONS, MATERIAL TESTING, GEOTECHNICAL, AND/OR RELATED SERVICES

1. Purpose

In its mission of “*Building Georgia’s Future*”, the Georgia State Financing and Investment Commission (GSFIC) Construction Division provides construction related services to state agencies and local school systems to develop, preserve, protect, and enhance Georgia’s infrastructure. GSFIC’s core values are Stewardship, Excellence, Leadership, and Fairness; therefore, in providing these services, GSFIC is committed to *quality construction*. Special Inspections, Material Testing and Geotechnical Services play a major role in ensuring the quality of State of Georgia construction projects. Since these services are typically procured and contracted directly by the Design Professional firm for the project, it is in the interest of Georgia citizens for GSFIC to require Design Professionals for GSFIC-administered construction projects to select these firms with the utmost consideration of their qualifications.

On July 1, 2005, GSFIC issued a notice which officially informed Georgia’s Design Professional firms of GSFIC’s strict enforcement of the requirements of Chapter 17 of the 2000 Edition of the International Building Code (IBC) concerning Special Inspections, as adopted and amended by the State of Georgia beginning September 1, 2005 (See Appendix 1, 7/1/05 letter from Gena Abraham, Director of GSFIC Construction Division). Such requirement was *not* a new contractual burden for Design Professional firms. However, with this notice, Design Professional firms were also informed that Qualifications Based Selection (QBS) would be required for procuring Special Inspections, effective immediately. Specifically, the directive stated the Design Professional’s procedures to select these firms must generally be in accordance with Section 50-22-6 of the Official Code of Georgia Annotated (O.C.G.A.), and also with the *GSFIC Special Inspections Guidelines* (located on the GSFIC Internet Web site (www.gsfic.ga.gov) under “critical documents”)

The following guidelines are provided by GSFIC to aid Design Professionals in acquiring services from the most appropriately-qualified Special Inspection, Material Testing, Geotechnical, and related agencies and firms for State of Georgia construction projects. GSFIC must be closely consulted during this process and will, in most cases, assign a representative to serve in, and/or as a consultant to, the selection process.

2. Overview of Qualifications-Based Selection

Qualifications-Based Selection (QBS) is a type of selection for services that intentionally avoids giving any weight to any proposed fee for those services. That is not to say that fees are unimportant. Fees have an important role to play in the contracting process, only not in the “selection” process. Instead, QBS allows firms to compete initially solely upon their qualifications and demonstrated expertise.

Finalist firms are further ranked by the evaluation of their qualifications. After the Committee determines the top-ranked firm, a meeting with the firm to negotiate the final fees will be arranged. Having settled fees, the firm may be offered a contract to sign. If there is no agreement on fees or contract with the top-ranked firm, negotiations with the firm will be terminated. Negotiations will commence in the same manner with the second-ranked firm, and so on, until an agreement is reached.

The following section explains how the QBS approach has been modified to adapt to the introduction of an *Application Procedure for Basic Prequalification* of Special Inspection Agencies, Material Testing Agencies, and Geotechnical Consultants.

3. GSFIC Application Procedure for Basic Prequalification

Effective April, 2006, Special Inspection, Material Testing, and Geotechnical entities who wish to be considered for GSFIC-administered State projects, must submit applications for basic pre-qualification. The Application, and the list of basically pre-qualified or “eligible” firms, once substantially compiled, may be viewed at www.gsfic.ga.gov. Among other benefits, the application process is intended to bolster the qualification levels of the Special Inspection, Testing, Geotechnical and related industries in Georgia by providing an incentive for companies to attain professional accreditation and certification for continual improvement of these highly-demanding skilled services.

GSFIC requires these firms who wish to be considered for GSFIC-administered State projects to submit to this application process for “basic pre-qualification”, or, long-term eligibility for consideration of services. The application, and necessary attachments, must be submitted by firms which are interested in being considered for services. Applications received will be reviewed by GSFIC for determination of the applicant’s eligibility, based on the minimum requirements met by the applicant. Eligible applicants will be placed into a pool of “pre-qualified” service providers for a period of two years, contingent on the firm’s continued eligibility. Applicants will be notified of eligibility status within (60) days of application. The pool of providers will be the source of Special Inspection, Material Testing, and Geotechnical firms for GSFIC and Design Professionals to consider for inspection and testing services on GSFIC-administered State Projects.

4. Recommended Selection Procedures

The Design Professional’s selection of the firms for project services will be accomplished by a qualifications-based-selection (QBS) process, in compliance with the GSFIC directive. The actual contract with these firms will be held by the Design Professional; therefore, GSFIC does not intend to dictate, in minute detail, the specific manner in which the selection process will take place. However, the following general parameters and procedures should be closely followed, and GSFIC strongly encourages Design Professionals to seek GSFIC consultation whenever necessary. Due to the range of projects, and the varying service costs, complexity, and scopes, GSFIC has established the following cost thresholds for Design Professionals in determining the correct selection procedures:

- **Procedure-Type “A”- Services costing less than \$10,000.00:**

When total costs of single Special Inspections, Material Testing, Geotechnical, or related service are anticipated to be under \$10,000.00, the Design Professional may **choose one (1) appropriately-qualified firm** from the GSFIC pool of eligible firms. (Specific recommended procedures for choosing from eligible firms are described herein)

- **Procedure-Type “B”- Services costing \$10,000.00 to \$75,000.00:**

When total costs of single Special Inspections, Material Testing, Geotechnical, or related service are anticipated to be over \$10,000.00, but under \$75,000.00, the Design Professional may use a **1-step QBS process** to choose from appropriately-qualified firms in the GSFIC pool of eligible firms. (Specific recommended procedures are described herein)

- **Procedure-Type “C”- Services costing more than \$75,000.00:**

When total costs of single Special Inspections, Material Testing, Geotechnical, or related service are anticipated to be over \$75,000.00, the Design Professional should use a **2-step QBS process** to choose from appropriately-qualified firms in the GSFIC pool of eligible firms. (Specific recommended procedures are described herein)

Procedure-Type “A”- Choosing one firm from the GSFIC pool of eligible firms

Because GSFIC requires and verifies the minimum qualifications of Special Inspections, Material Testing and Geotechnical Firms in the basic pre-qualification process, the pool of these eligible firms generally should meet requirements for services anticipated to cost **under \$10,000.00**. The GSFIC minimum qualifications required and held by eligible firms include:

- **Special Inspection Services:** Special Inspection Agency must: a) Meet required qualifications of, and must adhere to, the GSFIC Special Inspection Guidelines; b) Meet the requirements of ASTM E329.
- **Material Testing Services:** Shall meet the requirements of ASTM E329.
- **Geotechnical Services:** Geotechnical firm must: a) Hold a valid Certificate of Authorization with the state of GA indicating that they are approved to provide engineering consulting services; b) Employ a GA licensed professional engineer, who has at least 10 years of experience in the field of geotechnical engineering, as a fulltime employee to the firm; c) Have evidence of a record of successful projects, similar in scope to GSFIC projects, over the past 5 years; d) Maintain at least \$2 million professional liability insurance; and, e) meet the requirements of ASTM E329.

Although the eligible firms in the pool meet the above minimums, Design Professionals should take great care in choosing the firm which is most appropriately qualified for the project services anticipated. Criteria considered by the Design Professional in determining the firm may include, but not be limited to, the following:

- Relevance of service categories checked to incumbent project.
- Accreditation types and levels.
- Proximity of office/laboratory location to incumbent project.
- Field personnel's certification types and levels.

The Design Professional shall promptly begin negotiations with the firm determined to be most appropriately qualified, in order to reach a contract for a reasonable cost. If a contract cannot be reached for any reason, the Design Professional should formally break off negotiations with that firm, and begin negotiations with a second qualified firm, and so on, until a contract is reached. **Prior to contracting with the firm**, the Design Professional must submit a one or two-page final selection summary report to GSFIC outlining:

- Brief description of selection procedure (e.g., “Procedure Type A” and other relevant details, etc.)
- List of firms considered
- Recommendation and justification for final selection.
- Evidence that the negotiated price is reasonable for the project.

Procedure-Type “B”- Using a 1-Step QBS Procedure

When total costs of single Special Inspections, Material Testing, Geotechnical, or related service are anticipated to be over \$10,000.00, but under \$75,000.00, the Design Professional may use a **1-step QBS process** to choose from appropriately-qualified firms in the GSFIC pool of eligible firms. In the “1-step” process, 3 to 5 firms will be selected from the entire pool by the Design Professional and will be invited to submit statements of qualifications to the Design Professional for additional consideration. Criteria considered by the Design Professional in determining the 3 to 5 firms may include, but not be limited to, the following:

- Relevance of service categories checked to incumbent project
- Accreditation types and levels
- Proximity of office/laboratory location to incumbent project
- Field personnel's certification types and levels

In a *Request for Qualifications*, the Design Professional will formally request the 3 to 5 chosen participant firms to submit additional information in the form of a *Statement of Qualifications* about their firms for QBS processing. Information requested and considered by the Design Professional in selecting a firm to perform services on the incumbent project may include a few of the following deliverables/criteria, or other deliverables/criteria as deemed appropriate:

- Experience history on related projects
- References (Owner's/DP's) of recent projects
- Related tests performed and techniques used
- Field and laboratory equipment inventory
- Equipment calibration procedures
- Field procedures
- Current workload
- Evidence of understanding of codes and standards
- Description of procedures for handling and reporting discrepancies
- Quality assurance practices
- Individual field personnel's experience (overall and with provider)
- On-site inspection of the firm's laboratory and office facilities to verify certain competencies.
- The firm's staffing diagram and percentage of proposed project time per proposed team member.

In the 1-step process, a qualified Selection Committee of 3 or 5 individuals representing the Design Professional will evaluate the submitted Statements of Qualifications using appropriate criteria (above or other). The Selection Committee should either: a) include an appropriate GSFIC representative; or, b) closely consult an appropriate GSFIC representative during the selection. The Committee will individually review, score, and rank the submittals by weighting the criteria used for the selection. The deliverables, criteria, and corresponding weights must be pre-communicated to the submitting firms in the issued Request for Qualifications. The highest ranked firm, using the sum of the individual Selection Committee members' rankings, will be the apparent awardee, subject to actual contract negotiation with the Design Professional. If a contract cannot be reached for any reason with the highest-ranked firm, the Design Professional must formally break off negotiations with the highest-ranked firm and may negotiate with the second highest-ranked firm and so on, until an agreement is reached.

Prior to contracting with the firm, the Design Professional must submit a one or two-page final selection summary report to GSFIC outlining:

- Brief description of selection procedure (e.g., "Procedure Type B" and other relevant details, etc.)
- List of firms considered and submitting firms.
- Recommendation and justification for final selection.
- Evidence that the negotiated price is reasonable for the project.

Procedure Type "C"- Using a 2-Step QBS Procedure

For larger and more complex scopes of project services involving Special Inspections, Material Testing, Geotechnical, or related firms which are anticipated to be over \$75,000.00, the Design Professional should use a **2-step QBS process** to choose from appropriately-qualified firms in the GSFIC pool of eligible firms. Because a thorough selection process is necessary to maximize

the competitive opportunity for firms, as well as promote an efficient evaluation, a two-step process is recommended for qualifications-based selection for larger scopes of services. In the “2-step” process, the section of the entire GSFIC pool of eligible firms whose services are relevant to the project (such as “structural steel” if structural steel inspection is being procured) will be solicited by advertisement of the Design Professional’s Request for Qualifications by GSFIC and will be invited to submit statements of qualifications to the Design Professional for additional consideration. The Design Professional must submit a short (one page) advertisement to GSFIC Procurement Services for placement of the advertisement on the Georgia Procurement Registry (www.doas.state.ga.us). Eligible firms, who will be encouraged and assisted by GSFIC to subscribe for automatic notification from the site, will obtain the information concerning the opportunity from the site.

In a *Request for Qualifications*, the Design Professional will formally request all interested, appropriate participants from the pool to submit additional information in the form of a *Statement of Qualifications* about their firms for QBS processing. Information requested and considered by the Design Professional in selecting a firm to perform services on the incumbent project may include a few of the following deliverables/criteria, or other deliverables/criteria (as deemed appropriate for the project):

- Relevance of service categories checked to incumbent project
- Accreditation types and levels
- Proximity of office/laboratory location to incumbent project
- Field personnel’s certification types and levels
 - Experience history on related projects
 - References (Owner’s/DP’s) of recent projects
 - Related tests performed and techniques used
 - Field and laboratory equipment inventory
 - Equipment calibration procedures
 - Field procedures
 - Current workload
 - Evidence of understanding of codes and standards
 - Description of procedures for handling and reporting discrepancies
 - Quality assurance practices
 - Individual field personnel’s experience (overall and with provider)
 - On-site inspection of the firm’s laboratory and office facilities to verify certain competencies.

In the 2-step process, a qualified Selection Committee of 3 or 5 individuals representing the Design Professional will evaluate the submitted Statements of Qualifications using appropriate criteria (above or other). The Selection Committee should either: a) include an appropriate GSFIC representative; or, b) closely consult an appropriate GSFIC representative during the selection. The Committee will individually review, score, and rank the submittals by weighting the criteria used for the selection. The deliverables, criteria, and corresponding weights must be pre-communicated to the submitting firms in the issued Request for Qualifications. The 3 to 5 highest ranked firms, using the sum of the individual Selection Committee members’ rankings, will be the apparent finalists.

The finalists will then be invited by the Design Professional to submit Project Proposals and submit to an interview by the Selection Committee. Among other information requested, the Project Proposal should include proposed team qualifications and experience data which specifically relates to the project at hand, and other project-related plans and methods. Deliverables and criteria for evaluation of the proposals and interviews may include the following (or other project specific information):

- Firm’s staffing diagram and percentage of proposed project time per team member

- Firm's proposed techniques and methodologies for the project.
- Detailed project plans and schedule for project.

The Committee will individually review, score, and rank the Project Proposals and Interviews by weighting the criteria used for the selection. The deliverables, criteria, and corresponding weights must be pre-communicated to the submitting firms in the issued Request for Project Proposal or Notice to Finalists. The highest ranked firm, using the sum of the individual Selection Committee members' rankings, will be the apparent awardee, subject to actual contract negotiation with the Design Professional. If a contract cannot be reached for any reason with the highest-ranked firm, the Design Professional must formally break off negotiations with the highest-ranked firm and may negotiate with the second highest-ranked firm and so on, until an agreement is reached.

Prior to contracting with the firm, the Design Professional must submit a one or two-page final selection summary report to GSFIC outlining:

- Brief description of selection procedure (e.g., "Procedure Type C" and other relevant details, etc.)
- List of firms considered and submitting firms.
- Recommendation and justification for final selection.
- Evidence that the negotiated price is reasonable for the project.

5. Additional Procedural Information for Design Professionals

For more specific guidance on managing a selection, including committee roles, development of solicitation documents, scoring documents and responsible review of submittals, Design Professionals should consult (Section 3.2-B-3- *Selection of Consultants*) in the Statewide Construction Manual.

Appendix 1



GEORGIA STATE FINANCING AND INVESTMENT COMMISSION
Second Floor
270 Washington Street
Atlanta, Georgia 30334

Gena L. Abraham, *Director*

(404) 463-5600

July 1, 2005

RE: International Building Code Special
Inspections Requirements

To the Principal of the Firm:

This letter is to make you aware that, as of September 1, 2005, the Georgia State Financing and Investment Commission (GSFIC) will strictly enforce the requirements of Chapter 17 of the 2000 Edition of the International Building Code (IBC) concerning Special Inspections, as adopted and amended by the State of Georgia. Our contracts have long required compliance with all applicable portions of the IBC, so this is not a new or additional contractual burden.

Enclosed please find the following document for your review and use:

- a. A Technical Bulletin with details and guidelines of our Special Inspection program.

The referenced appendices to the Technical Bulletin are posted on the GSFIC web site, <http://gsfic.georgia.gov>, under Critical Documents. The appendices contain the Program Instructions, Special Inspection Responsibilities, Special Inspector Qualifications and various forms associated with the program. Please download these documents from the web site for your use.

These documents will also be attached to future contracts, and we will make them available to all appropriate parties at the beginning of every new project.

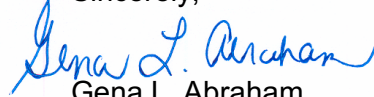
Furthermore, please note that Qualifications Based Selection is required for professionals performing Special Inspections. This change will be enforced by GSFIC and will require the Design Professional to procure services for Special

Inspections in accordance with Chapter 22 of Title 50 of the Official Code of Georgia Annotated (O.C.G.A.), in particular O.C.G.A. Section 50-22-6.

GSFIC is also willing to provide a presentation on Chapter 17 of the 2000 IBC to your organization. This presentation will cover: "What are Special Inspections and Its Background", "The Special Inspection Process", "The Players and Their Roles", "Special Inspection Documents and Forms", and "The Additional Requirements of Chapter 17". If you would like GSFIC to provide this presentation, at the site of your choosing, please contact Paul Shelton at 404-463-5675 or email at pshelton@gsfic.ga.gov.

We expect these Special Inspections to result in earlier discovery and resolution of construction problems, clearer communication of the needs of the parties and of the project and, most important, a higher-quality product for our Using Agencies. We look forward to your cooperation and support of this initiative.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Gena L. Abraham". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Gena" being the most prominent.

Gena L. Abraham
Director

GLA:ps:ag